



Handel's Path to Covent Garden

E.A. Bucchianeri

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Introduction

George Frideric Handel's career as an Italian opera composer in England was fraught with many adversities and he was frequently forced to confront countless difficulties and irritations. The first manifestations of these problems emerged when Italians influenced by the Arcadian Academy in Italy attempted to usurp the English cultural scene and supplant their own ideals of reformed Italian opera in London during the early 1700s. When the Royal Academy was established in 1719, Handel encountered a myriad of challenges with this particular circle, which had been reinforced by the arrival of additional influential Arcadians, notably the difficulties with the castrato Francesco Bernardi ("Senesino"), the competition from the composer Giovanni Bononcini, and most importantly, the antagonism of the librettist Paolo Rolli who had previously arrived in 1715. A conflict in ideals escalated and permeated the entire Academy, thereby creating numerous altercations between the directors, composers, singers, subscribers, and their supporters.

Handel's greatest challenges were yet to emerge when the Royal Academy collapsed in 1728 as the popularity for Italian opera in London waned and the desire for an English style of opera waxed stronger. During this time, Handel remained undaunted by this unorthodox chain of events and entered into a partnership with John Jacob Heidegger, the manager of the King's Theatre in the Haymarket, for the next four to five years, whereby he persisted with his personal ambitions for the production of Italian opera. In 1733, the nobility formed a rival opera company with Rolli and Senesino in competition with Handel, recognised today as the Opera of the Nobility. In 1734, when their business obligation concluded, Heidegger leased the King's Theatre to the new opera company; as a result of Heidegger's action, Handel entered into a venture with John Rich at Covent Garden and remained there until 1737 struggling with the competition from the Opera of the Nobility company. Finally, both ventures collapsed as the public's support

splintered between the two rival theatres.

We may regard the 1730s as the most trying decade of Handel's career; unfortunately, this period became obscured through time and speculation, therefore many questions have remained unanswered. To enable us to comprehend this era, it is necessary for us to explore the important issues and subsequent circumstances that effected his transfer to Covent Garden in 1734. We may question what initially prompted Handel to relocate to Covent Garden. Did his past experiences at the Royal Academy set the pattern for future obstacles and confrontations that he was compelled to contend with during the 1730s? Perhaps many of the difficulties Handel encountered with Rolli and his Italian circle of friends and supporters perpetuated similar disturbances later in Handel's career. This may be the key to answer many of the questions relating to Handel's relocation, and may explain his progressive and creative innovations displayed within his operas from this period.

My primary objectives of this study are: to determine what initiated these difficulties, establish how and when the problems and related issues presented themselves, and attempt to interpret the influences they exerted on Handel's opera career during the 1730s, in particular, his first Covent Garden term from 1734–1737. Apparently, these problems gradually emerged and progressed as time and events unfolded. My philosophical research and observations pertaining to this current study have presented themselves sequentially. Therefore, the logical procedure is to examine and present all the major issues and related facts in chronological order, concluding with a brief review of Handel's career in Covent Garden. I hope by using this method of deduction, the challenges encountered by Handel during the 1720s and 1730s may be effectively illustrated, thereby clarifying the circumstances concerning his relocation to Covent Garden.

Acknowledgements:

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Ellen T. Harris and Dr. Reinhard Strohm. Throughout the course of my research, they graciously corresponded and offered assistance.

I am also indebted to the Handelian scholars whose work and previous research contributed significantly to this philosophical study of Handel's path to Covent Garden.

Editorial Policy:

The format of the various quotes, i.e. punctuation, spellings and italics, have been preserved unless otherwise stated. For the sake of clarity, quotes from John Mainwaring's biography of Handel containing the letter 's' spelled as 'ȝ' in Old English have been altered. Where no translations of foreign language texts have been offered, I have taken the liberty of translating them as accurately as possible myself; these passages will be indicated. Italics that I have inserted have been indicated, and/or should be clear from the context. Ellipses, including those within brackets, [...], or parentheses, (...), have been inserted by other authors, e.g. if ellipses form part of a quote taken from a secondary source. Ellipses or observations inserted within braces, e.g. {...}, indicate my own observations and editing. Dates have been given as they stand in the sources, English primary sources are in the Old Style. Dates given after the title of an opera or similar work generally refer to a premiere, unless reference to a specific production is intended, which should be clear from the context.

Chapter 1

The Demand for Italian Opera in London and the Creation of the Rival Factions

John Mainwaring in his important biography of Handel lauds the days of the Royal Academy as “a period of musical glory” — not many would argue with this description.¹ In 1719, the Royal Academy was founded by members of the British aristocracy to provide London with Italian opera on a permanent basis with a secure financial foundation; previously, Italian opera had floundered in England, as this form of entertainment was an expensive novelty to maintain and did not enjoy assured financial protection. With the advent of these new “secure” days, London became one of the greatest opera centres of Europe and could boast of having the most renowned composers and singers in the world at its disposal. During this time, Handel’s operas achieved phenomenal success; undoubtedly it was a period of musical glory for Handel where Italian opera was concerned.

However, Mainwaring paints a cloud upon this description in his next paragraph; he declares in so many words, the Academy was doomed from the very beginning like all finite objects in that the seeds of its dissolution were carried within from its very inception.² Mainwaring asserted the timing of the eventual closure of such a venture depends on those who impede the inevitable, or further its outcome. This is a rather dramatic and philosophical perception of the Academy’s demise, yet it is one perception that obviously

¹ John Mainwaring, *Memoirs of the Life of the Late George Frederic Handel* (London: R. And J. Dodsley, in Pall Mall, 1760). Reprint, (New York: Da Capo Press Music Reprint Series, 1980), p.106.

² Ibid. pp. 106–107.

requires further exploration. Did Handel unwittingly contribute to the demise of the Royal Academy or was he attempting to delay the inevitable? Could Handel have prevented the closure of the Royal Academy and thereby avert the forthcoming problems that resulted with his relocation to Covent Garden?

In an attempt to address these questions, it is important to ascertain if the Academy was truly doomed from its inception as Mainwaring suggests. Noticeably, Mainwaring concentrates on the *personal* factors behind the scenes that caused the friction, i.e. the quarrels between the directors, singers, and composers. True, the financial management and the day-to-day administration of the company created its own consequences, yet other circumstances could have determined the closure of such an enterprise. What exactly were the motivations of the administrators or regulators who worked or participated within the Academy? Different viewpoints vigorously defended whether they are correct or incorrect have often resulted with the termination of lifelong friendships and business partnerships.

A similar observation may be applied to the various factions that developed within the Academy. In Otto Erich Deutsch's documentary biography a hostile party opposing Handel within the Academy is apparent; particularly within the various surviving letters of the Italian librettist Paolo Rolli.³ Subsequently in his book, Mainwaring, in describing the rival group in opposition to Handel during the 1730s, i.e. the Opera of the Nobility, relates that it was an Italian orientated clique.⁴ Mainwaring was obviously fascinated

³ These letters are reprinted in Otto Erich Deutsch's book, *Handel; a Documentary Biography* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1974). Reprint of the 1955 edition, (New York: W.W. Norton).

⁴ Mainwaring offers this comment concerning the formation of the Opera of the Nobility and the skill of one of their composers, Hasse; "He is remarkable for his fine elevated air, with hardly so much as the shew of harmony to support it. And this may serve not only for a character of Hasse — in particular, but of the Italians in general, at the time we are

with the idea that a hostile party besieged Handel; however, there may be some grain of truth to his observation. Handel's friend, Johann Mattheson, wrote this account relating Handel's difficulties of the 1730s:

Once a report had it that, on account of the Italian spite and persecution, he was at the end of his tether. That was shortly before the time when, as mentioned before, *he instanced me of his unfortunate circumstances.*⁵

This quote raises additional questions requiring further investigation. Did this Italian faction facilitate the downfall of the Royal Academy and consequently precipitate Handel's difficulties of the 1730s? Why were they resistant to Handel who was partial to Italian *opera seria* in the first instance? What actions did Handel take to have provoked such irritation? Perhaps Handel resisted them for a particular reason. What instigated such aggravation in this noble organisation? Who sowed the “seeds of dissolution” within the Academy?

We observe it is important to determine when and why these factions materialised, and to accomplish this we need to understand the circumstances that initiated this rivalry. Generally, it may be stated that a new group or society is founded to provide a necessary service or to carry out an objective, and in order to secure a viable organisation, it would be necessary for the members to reach an agreement whereby they would comply with a focused agenda. In

speaking of. The opposition in which they were engaged against Handel, made him look upon that merit in his antagonists with much indifference, and upon this defect with still more contempt.” Mainwaring, pp. 117–118.

⁵ Johann Mattheson, “Grundlage Einer Ehren-Pforte,” (Hamburg, 1740.) Quoted in Deutsch, p. 505. The letter of Handel that Mattheson was referring to was written in July, 1735.

this instance, the Royal Academy was established to produce opera; however, it is possible that a clash of ideals was the main cause of discord if the various members of the Royal Academy developed their own singular plans for the organisation and they failed to comply with a definite agenda or policy.

Surprisingly, it would seem these factions emerged very early, i.e. before and during the time of Handel's arrival in 1710. While it may appear futile to examine the series of events dating from the pre-Academy days, Handel's future problems had their foundations set during the years 1705–1719. When Italian opera was initially introduced to England, the Italians present in London endeavoured to subdue English attempts at developing their own style of opera. The ideology encompassing opera culture in London fluctuated as these developments took effect; therefore, many opera enthusiasts entertained varying and conflicting opinions on what they anticipated of opera. This public perception would affect the foundation of the Royal Academy in 1719; therefore, it is essential to review the major highlights of this early period.

In 1705, Italian opera was introduced to London audiences through the work *Arsinoe* that was originally set by Petronio Franceschini and produced in 1677.⁶ This London version featured a text entirely in English and the music was composed with the collaboration of three different composers: Thomas Clayton, Nicolino Haym, and Charles Dieupart.⁷ Eric Walter White states that the production of operatic genres was inevitable, as there were many superb foreign and domestic singers present in London at that time.⁸ White surmised they may have desired the opportunity to

⁶ Eric Walter White, *A History of English Opera* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., BAS Printers Ltd., 1983), p. 140.

⁷ Ibid. p. 140.

⁸ These singers were Signora Maria Lindelheim, who had learned to sing in Italy, Francesca Margarita de l'Epine, and her sister Maria Margarita Gallia. There was also Mrs. Catherine Tofts, an English singer known for performing Italian and English songs who was in direct

perform in an opera as their principal performances consisted of singing songs for concerts in the various theatres; naturally, Italian opera proved to be the obvious model for this undertaking.⁹

However, evidence suggests the opera *Arsinoe* was initially intended to serve as an example of what could be accomplished to further the progress of *English* music. Primarily, the cast was English, also, Clayton in his preface to the libretto of *Arsinoe* wrote:

The design of this entertainment being to introduce the Italian manner of musick on the English stage, which has not been before attempted; I was oblig'd to have an Italian opera translated; In which the words, however mean in several places, suited much better with that manner of musick, than others more poetical would do. The stile of this music is to express the passions, which is the soul of the musick; And though the voices are not equal to the Italian, yet I have engag'd the best that were to be found in England, and I have not been wanting, to the utmost of my diligence, in the instructing of them. The musick being recitative, may not, at first, meet with that general acceptation as is hop'd for from the audience's being better acquainted with it; But if this attempt shall, by pleasing the nobility and gentry, *be a means of bringing this manner of music to be use'd by in my native country,*^{*} I shall think all my study and pains very well employ'd.¹⁰

Obviously, the primary goal of this endeavour was to introduce only the *manner* of Italian music into England. It was the introduction of recitative that Clayton hoped would prove

competition with Margarita de l'Epine. Ibid. pp. 138–139.

⁹ Ibid. p. 140.

^{*} Italics added.

¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 140–141.

successful, adding that all his work would have been rewarded if the English were willing to adopt the convention of recitative upon hearing *Arsinoe*. Therefore, we may venture that although this work is regarded as the first introduction of Italian opera to London audiences, it was intended to serve an alternative purpose. Perhaps *Arsinoe* was designed as an example of what the English could accomplish with respect to their native dramatic genres and develop what Henry Purcell had achieved with his semi-operas?

There are other examples that may prove the Italian operas introduced were intended to further the cause for English opera. The following operas also featured English texts adapted from the original Italian sources: *The Loves of Ergasto* (April 1705), *The Temple of Love* (March 1706), and *Camilla* (March 1706).¹¹ An additional attempt to improve English opera occurred with the production of *Rosamond* (March 1707). It was predominately English and composed “after the Italian Manner”; Joseph Addison wrote the libretto and the music was composed by Clayton.¹² Apparently, Clayton was following his own council from his prologue of *Arsinoe* by attempting to continue the introduction of the Italian style he had initiated through *Rosamond*. Sadly, this venture was a failure and lasted for only three performances; had this work succeeded, the history of English opera may have been changed.¹³

Unfortunately, it would appear the design to introduce Italian opera as a medium to reform English genres had backfired. One of the primary reasons for this failure was the increasing number of Italian singers arriving in London; obviously, audiences began to appreciate the Italian style of singing when heard with the

¹¹ Ibid. p. 141.

¹² Ibid. p. 142.

¹³ Merril Knapp attributes the failure of this work to the lack of quality in Clayton’s music and the weak English adaptation of the plot. See Merril Knapp, ‘A Forgotten Chapter in English Eighteenth-Century Opera,’ *Music and Letters* Vol. XLII (1961): p. 5.

original Italian language.¹⁴ When the castrato Valentini Urbano arrived from Italy in December of 1707, producers altered the text of *Camilla*, thereby making it possible for him to perform his verses in Italian.¹⁵ Apparently, this change secured the success of *Camilla*, although this motley half-bred result in the dialogue created confusion. Valentini sang in a similar fashion in other English-translated operas such as *Thomyris, Queen of Scythia* (April, 1707) and *Love's Triumph* (1708).¹⁶ Valentini would be joined later by the celebrated castrato Nicolo Grimaldi, ('Nicolini'), in 1708. Nicolini's first London appearance was in *Pyrrhus and Demetrius* (December, 1708); he performed in Italian with Valentini while Mrs. Tofts and the other ladies sang in English.¹⁷ Nicolini was a phenomenal success, and audiences acclaimed his skills as an actor.

Having experienced these singers perform in their native language, English audiences now wished to hear Italian opera as it was originally composed featuring the Italian language and musical style. They evidently misunderstood the intentions concerning the translation of Italian operas into English, and the endeavor to reform and produce English operas using the Italian format as Cibber's comment illustrates:

{...} the *Italian Opera* began first to steal into *England*, but in a rude disguise, and unlike itself as possible; in a lame, hobbling Translation into our own Language, with false Quantities, or Metre out of Measure to its original Notes, sung by our own unskilled Voices, with Graces misapply'd to almost every Sentiment, and with Action lifeless and unmeaning through every Character, {...}¹⁸

¹⁴ See f. 8, regarding the Italian singers already present in London.

¹⁵ White, *English Opera*, p. 142.

¹⁶ Ibid. pp. 143.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 145.

¹⁸ Ed. Robert W. Low, "An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley

Other circumstances may have facilitated this misunderstanding with the public. For instance, there were additional attempts at introducing Italian opera to further the cause of English opera development, as we observe with Aaron Hill's intentions concerning Handel's opera *Rinaldo* of 1711:

Nor shall I then be longer doubtful of succeeding in my Endeavour, to see the *English* OPERA more splendid than her MOTHER the Italian.

¹⁹

However, they undermined their own efforts by creating operas with greater emphasis on the Italianate style. In hindsight, we may perceive they inadvertently erred; alternatively, they could have perfected the flaws experienced in the past as with *Rosamond* by producing new operas emphasising a distinctive Anglican style. Hill's preface in the wordbook for *Rinaldo* clearly illustrates his well-intentioned miscalculations. (See Appendix One.) Hill's solution to the awkward Anglican endeavours was to improve the Italian model and thereby construct a satisfactory example for the English. *However, he may have created a demand for authentic Italian opera.* True, the English translated operas may not appear as skillfully composed when compared with their Italian originals, yet again we can argue that an authentic reproduction of Italian opera may not have been intended. Notwithstanding the commendable endeavours to improve English opera, they continued to highlight the deficiencies perceived with the English translated operas by perpetuating this method of adopting the Italian model for reformatory purposes. Hill had provided for the lack of a complete Italian text through his collaboration with Rossi and thereby had

Cibber," (London: 1889), in Merril Knapp; 'A Forgotten Chapter,' p. 5.

¹⁹ From Hill's dedication to Queen Anne in the wordbook of *Rinaldo*, in Deutsch, p. 32.

rectified the “hobbling Translation” stated by Cibber with “Words so sounding and rich in Sense” as Hill himself described. Elaborate stage machinery had also been employed which enhanced the novelty of the production. Of paramount significance, Handel composed the music incorporating the skills he had recently absorbed in Italy; to the aural perception of the London audiences, this musical experience must have been astounding, and as a result, the earlier English attempts of setting music to the Italian model were revealed as pale shadows in comparison. Under these circumstances, the public’s enthusiasm to embrace Italian opera is comprehensible.

However, other composers endeavoured to amend the misunderstandings that resulted from adopting the Italian format, ironically, by producing additional English operas based on the Italian model. For instance, one particularly important attempt at composing an English opera should be mentioned. The opera in question is *Calypso and Telemachus*; it was produced in May 1712 with text by John Huges and music by John Erst Galliard.²⁰ (Incidentally, Handel had returned to Germany at this point.) We notice they contrived this opera to rectify the misconceptions entertained by the English when observing a section of Huges’ preface to the printed libretto; notice in particular the first and last paragraphs of the quoted example:

The following OPERA is an Essay for the Improvement of Theatrical Music in the *English* Language, after the Model of the *Italians*.

It is certain, that this Art has for a considerable time florish’d in *Italy* in greater Perfection than in any other Country. As the *Grecians* were formerly the Masters in Architecture, Sculpture, Painting and Musick, whose Rules and Examples were follow’d by

²⁰ Knapp, ‘A Forgotten Chapter,’ p. 7.

other Nations, the *Italians* are generally allow'd to be so now. It is some Years that Musick of our Theatre has been almost wholly supply'd by them. Their most celebrated *Opera's* have been introduc'd among us, and a generous Encouragement has been given to such as came over, and perform'd Parts in them on the *English* Stage. By this means the Entertainments of *Italy* are become familiar to us, and our Audiences have heard the finest Compositions and Performances of *Rome* and *Venice*, without trouble of travelling to those Places.

I am not of the Opinion of those who impute this Encouragement given to *Italian* Musick, to an Affectation of every thing that is Foreign.

I wou'd rather ascribe it to the ingenuous Temper of the *British* Nation, that they are willing to be instructed in so elegant an Art by the best Examples. But after this Justice done to others, there is likewise a Justice due to our selves. It cou'd never have been the Intention of those, who first promoted the *Italian* Opera, that it shou'd take the intire [sic] Possession of our Stage, to the Exclusion of every thing of the like kind, which might be produc'd here. This wou'd be to suppress that Genius which Foreigners so commonly applaud in the *English*, who if they are not always the Inventors of Arts, are yet allow'd to be no ill Learners, and are often observ'd to improve that Knowledge, which they first receiv'd from others. {...}²¹

Calypso and Telemachus, like *Rosamond*, would be ill fated to have a short life; it had four performances with three more revivals in 1717.²² Obviously, this opera was produced too late as *Rinaldo* had already swept the public away; perhaps if they had

²¹ Ibid. pp. 10–11.

²² Ibid. p. 7.

produced *Calypso* before *Rinaldo*, the message contained in the libretto preface may have been acted upon at an earlier date.

This attempt to correct the “Italian opera controversy” did not create the desired result, however, the English refused to retreat from the operatic scene. The obvious short-term solution until this issue could be resolved was to return to the English masters of the past; the reopening of the Lincoln’s-Inn-Fields theatre in November 1714 ushered in a revival of Purcell’s works.²³ There was a concert performance of *Dioclesian* in 1712, and was produced again from 1715 to 1718.²⁴ In 1715 and 1716, *The Island Princess* and select excerpts of music from *King Arthur* were performed, while in 1715 *The Indian Queen* and *Bonduca* were also revived.²⁵ In addition, other early English operas were produced such as *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*.²⁶ Concurrently, a renewed interest for theatrical masque developed while several of the earlier attempts figuring bilingual operas were revived such as *Camilla*, *Thomyris*, and *Calypso and Telemachus* as mentioned previously, in 1717. The quest to establish a national opera style had not vanished completely.

However, these attempts would not avert what had already been initiated; a rival faction had rallied in opposition to the English cause resulting in the embryonic formation of future conflicting factions. As we have observed, the English had planned to use the influential Italian singers who were present and their style of opera to further their own ambitions, however, it would appear the Italian performers and those affiliated with them developed their own agenda. This group, the “Italian circle” as George Dorris refers to them,²⁷ were apprehensive that these experiments with English opera

²³ For more information concerning which theatres produced the revivals, see White, *English Opera*, pp. 170–171.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 171.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ George E. Dorris, *Paolo Rolli and the Italian Circle in London* (The Hague: Mounton and Co., 1967), op. cit.

would be in direct competition with the fledgling Italian opera in England; they may also have been annoyed with the “mutilation” of their operas.

Strikingly, the English production of *Calypso* and *Telemachus* had more to contend with than the misfortune of its production occurring after *Rinaldo*. Apparently, this clique devised a despicable plot to foil *Calypso*, for it was reported they had approached the Lord Chamberlain, the Duke of Shrewsbury, to remove the subscription for this opera and to have the theatre opened at the lowest prices if he could not close it down completely.²⁸ The Italian circle was closely associated with the nobility, and with these powerful patrons and their support, they could promote the cause for their own opera; this is one example of how they could exert their influence.

The Gathering of the Italian Circle in London: The Arcadian Academy and its Influential Members

Subsequent to the formation of the Italian circle an “invasion” had been launched which would prove troublesome to the operatic scene in England for future decades. Surprisingly, this artistic revolution was concerned with the cause of literature rather than music aesthetics; many influential members of the Italian clique in London were part of, or were in connection with the Arcadian Academy, a society that had been established in Rome to reform Italian literature.²⁹ It is important for us to understand this movement and how it affected the opera culture of London as consequently it influenced Handel’s work.

The Academy first developed with the *letterati* who

²⁸ Knapp, ‘A Forgotten Chapter,’ p. 7.

²⁹ Dorris, *Italian Circle*, pp. 27–30.

assembled at the salon of Queen Christina of Sweden during the latter half of the seventeenth century, and was formally instituted in 1690.³⁰ Their intention was to reform Italian literature through simplicity and tranquillity symbolised by the pastoral life based upon the style of Virgil rather than a realistic ideal.³¹ Isadore Carini states that:

This was not an academy of mere poetry, but rather an eclectic gathering of the learned, devoted to every branch of human knowledge, brought together only in this: to reclaim good taste in Italy, where it was running to madness; to impede the announcement of great truths in insipid and rude language; to place honour over every other thing the art of giving form to thought; and to join the amenity of style and the adornment of the word to the real historical, moral, physical, and mathematical disciplines; a purpose, as is clearly apparent, nobler than any other.³²

Apparently, Italian theatrical drama was virtually nonexistent in the latter part of the seventeenth century and this encouraged the Arcadian reform movement.³³ During this period, spoken drama was performed in a select number of centres and academies in the major cities of Italy as in Rome, Parma, Modena, Bologna, Sienna and Florence.³⁴ Pier Jacopo Martelli, Gian-Vicenza Gravina, and Scipione Maffei initiated attempts to establish a national theatrical

³⁰ Ibid. p. 27.

³¹ Ibid. pp. 27–28.

³² Isadore Carini, ‘L’Arcadia dal 1690 al 1890’ (Roma: 1891): pp. 46–47 in Dorris, *Italian Circle*, p. 30.

³³ Dorris, *Italian Circle*, p. 31.

³⁴ Reinhard Strohm, *Dramma per Musica: Italian Opera Seria of the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 4.

style in collaboration with Luigi Riccoboni, yet they had no affect in promoting this purpose. The popularity of Italian *dramma per musica*³⁵ had eclipsed all these efforts towards spoken drama; alternatively, this genre had achieved the status of a national art form as Reinhart Strohm points out:

{...} Nevertheless, the *dramma per musica* in eighteenth-century Italy had the cultural significance of a national art-form. Italian opera was capable of suggesting a national unity which in political terms seemed unattainable. It inherited much of the aura of *italianità* which the Italian language and poetry had possessed since the times of Petrarch.³⁶

As a result, major reforms centred on Italian *opera seria* — reformists perceived opera as the most deplorable form of theatrical drama as they believed it had been subject to “corruptive elements”. Their goal was to establish refinement within the arts by imitating the true traditions of classical tragedy, according to their interpretation.³⁷ Their theories were derived from the philosophy of Aristotle and his conception of drama as subsequently developed by Pierre Corneille.³⁸

Drama was categorised into six sections descending in order of importance: (1) fable, (2) ethos, (3) pathos, (4) diction, (5) music, (6) and scenography. Frequently, the reformists regarded

³⁵ Dorris, *Italian Circle*, p. 32. Also, Strohm, *Dramma per Musica*, p. 4. Spoken comedies were more successful, but still could not compete with the popularity of opera. *Ibid.*

³⁶ Strohm, *Dramma per Musica*, p. 5.

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 122.

³⁸ Pierre Corneille, ‘Trois discours sur le poème dramatique (1660)’ from P. Corneille, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 3, ed. by Georges Counton (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), pp. 117–90, 123–34, in Strohm, *Dramma per Musica*, p. 17.

music as the most corrupt element and thereby listed it as the last category during this period.³⁹ Resulting from this perception, opera was considered a deviation from classical tradition. Strohm quotes Enrico Fubini concerning the contemporary view regarding music within *opera seria*:

But the degeneration was already contained *in nuce* in the genre of opera itself, from the very first appearance: music inevitably corroded its dramatic aspirations from its roots; it encroached on it as an element of disturbance, as a certain feeling, unexplainable under the light of reason, and unacceptable on the theatrical stage.⁴⁰

The Arcadians were dissatisfied with opera for in their opinion it failed to conform to the ideal of Aristotelian verisimilitude. Strohm neatly pinpoints the problem these reformists associated with opera:

The main conflict arose, of course, from the singing of arias. Singing on stage is reputed to be improbable in classicist theory (it contradicts Nature), especially in tragedy, which prefers heroic and historical plots and characters. In Italian opera the ‘reform’ librettos of the period around 1700, by increasingly adopting such plots, created a contradiction: according to theory, gods and shepherds were allowed to sing arias, but Alexander or Julius Caesar were not. This type of problem had already surfaced a century earlier:

³⁹ Strohm, *Dramma per Musica*, p. 239.

⁴⁰ Enrico Fubini, ‘Razionalità e irrazionalità in Metastasio,’ from *Metastasio e il melodrama*, ed. by Elena Sala di Felice and Laura Sannia Nowé (Padua: Liviana editrice, 1985): pp. 39–53, in Strohm, *Dramma per Musica*, p. 271.

orthodox Aristotelians, judging from the viewpoint of verisimilitude, condemned not only singing but even speaking in verse on the tragic stage.⁴¹

Therefore, we are not surprised to observe that the Arcadians concentrated significantly on the reformation of opera librettos. Giovanni Maria Crescimbeni had drastic proposals for operatic reformation as Strohm relates:

He advocated the return to the aesthetic of the *favole pastorali* with their pastoral setting (i.e. without change of scenery except for *macchine*), simple conflict (*nodo semplice*), few arias and much recitative, and choruses. The first two suggestions were at least extremely restrictive for the stage, {...}. The last two suggestions were particularly far-reaching as they affected the business of the composer — without mentioning him.⁴²

Crescimbeni praised others such as Apostolo Zeno who complied with the practise of diminishing the number of arias and placing greater emphasis on the recitatives in his librettos.⁴³ Incidentally, the librettists Paolo Rolli and Metastasio were influenced by Zeno's reforms.⁴⁴

Pietro Metastasio, recognised as one of the finest librettists of Italian *opera seria*, advocated these ideals and remained in firm opposition to the inclusion of music in the genre of opera. He also

⁴¹ Strohm, *Dramma per Musica*, pp. 202–203.

⁴² Ibid. p. 123.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Dorris, *Italian Circle*, p. 129. Zeno's influence is important to note as Rolli was one of the major figures behind the operatic scene in London, and Metastasio's librettos would become prominent in the 1730s. These points shall be examined later.

endorsed claims by contemporary critics who maintained the words should have greater importance than the music, thereby rendering the drama more intelligible, and/or to achieve expressive compatibility between the two elements.⁴⁵ His unparalleled success with librettos appears to be his development of the concept that ‘arias = emotion’ and ‘recitative = action’ as a method to breach the barriers separating music and verisimilitude.⁴⁶

The Arcadian scholar Ludovico Antonio Muratori also expressed his opposition to operatic music corresponding with Fubini’s observations concerning the aesthetics of the time.⁴⁷ Muratori had considerable influence for he was perceived as a “fixed point of reference” for those who were endeavouring to progress Italian letters in Italy and in other countries.⁴⁸

Resulting from these efforts, Italian dramatists concentrated primarily on the poetry of opera, as they attempted to assimilate opera into a dramatic literary genre by purging and suppressing its musical aspect. The librettists directed the rehearsals, not the composer,⁴⁹ and it has been suggested recitatives were on occasions delegated to composition students.⁵⁰ When a new production was commissioned, frequently the recitatives were newly composed while individual arias were reused and copied.⁵¹ Obviously, these conventions give precedence to the drama, diminishing the role of

⁴⁵ Strohm, *Drama per Musica*, p. 25.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 203.

⁴⁷ Ibid. pp. 123, 271.

⁴⁸ Dorris, *Italian Circle*, p. 26. Through the surviving letters written by the Modenese diplomat Riva to members of the Arcadian Academy, such as Muratori, (which are reproduced in Deutsch’s documentary of Handel), we observe how the Arcadians viewed the operatic scene in London.

⁴⁹ Reinhard Strohm, ‘Metastasio’s Alessandro nell’Indie and its earliest settings,’ *Essay’s on Handel and Italian Opera* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 234. Also Strohm, *Drama per musica*, p. 10.

⁵⁰ Strohm, *Drama per musica*, p. 10.

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 11.

the composer and his musical contribution to the genre. Could this possibly explain why the principal singers of a company were regarded with great esteem? They were perceived as the reciters of the poetic texts and as such were granted significant artistic freedom.

⁵² The availability of singers influenced the decisions regarding the subject of the text — not only were their roles customised, frequently whole operas were constructed to accommodate their individual personalities and skills. In addition, singers had considerable freedom of expression with the *da capo* aria where it was conventional for them to perform improvised ornamentation. Notably, they also had a personal repertory of arias, *arie di baule*, and upon their request, selections from this source were included in the opera.⁵³

Clearly it is evident no particular status was directed towards the composer's participation in the creation of an opera. Under these circumstances, the concept of a unified work, i.e. an equal relationship between music, drama, and scenography as we have become accustomed to expect of opera today in *Gesamtkunstwerk* fashion did not apply. These conventions would result in future problems for England, particularly with Handel's career and the formation of the Royal Academy.

The Members of the Italian Circle in London

In addition to centring their reforms in Italy, this Arcadian movement had extended its influence to other European cities, as in Paris and Vienna; the Arcadians were attempting to re-establish Italian dominance in art and literature which had been lost to France during the seventeenth century.⁵⁴ *Opera seria* was perceived as a

⁵² Strohm, 'Towards an Understanding of the opera seria,' *Essays*, pp. 97–99.

⁵³ Strohm, *Drama per Musica*, p. 11.

⁵⁴ Dorris, *Italian Circle*, p. 11.

national genre in Italy as previously mentioned, therefore it seemed the obvious medium to employ despite their reservations regarding this “corrupted” genre.

London would now become the next important conquest of the Arcadian “colonisation campaign”. We have already discussed the arrival of the first “settlers” in the previous section, i.e. the Italian singers, although they were not yet outright Arcadian activists. This fledgling clique during its early days rallied around the Duchess of Shrewsbury who evidently had been affiliated with the Arcadians; her mother’s first husband had served Queen Christina, the Arcadian patroness.⁵⁵ Originally from Italy, she converted to Protestantism and married the Duke of Shrewsbury in 1705.⁵⁶ Although members of the court regarded the Duchess unfavourably, she had considerable influence as a lady of the bedchamber to Queen Anne, and later to Caroline, the Princess of Wales.⁵⁷

During the remainder of her life in England, she continued to participate in Italian interests and used her influence in this regard. For example, the Duchess was witness to an upheaval that consequently resulted with the triumph of the Italian singers at the Queen’s Theatre in 1708–09. Evidently, the Duchess of Shrewsbury and the Duchess of Marlborough were present with other members of the nobility at a private recital featuring Nicolini and the English singer Mrs. Tofts in December 1708. Lady Wentworth recounted the following; Nicolini had conveyed his regrets and declined to perform, however the Duchess of Shrewsbury insisted on fetching him in her coach. Tofts then failed to perform as Nicolini had initially refused to attend and she departed in a rage; perhaps she viewed his refusal as a personal insult. White relates shortly after this episode, Tofts retired permanently from the stage in 1709, allowing the Italians to victoriously occupy the Queen’s Theatre

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 73.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 74.

without further competition from English performers.⁵⁸ As we observe, the Duchess of Shrewsbury was biased towards the Italians, and therefore may be regarded as the first Arcadian activist in London.

An additional controversy, as formerly mentioned, concerns the Duke of Shrewsbury who allegedly conspired to ruin the English production of *Calypso and Telemachus*. According to the editor of John Huges' correspondence, a conspiratorial link between the Duke of Shrewsbury's actions and the Italian Duchess had been noted:

Such was, at the time, the partiality in favour of Italian operas, that, after many such had been encouraged by large subscriptions, this of "Calypso and Telemachus", originally written and set in English after the Italian manner, was prepared with the usual expense of scenes and decorations; and being much crowded and applauded at the rehearsals, a subscription was obtained for it as usual. [i.e., raising the prices well above the general level]. This alarmed the whole Italian band, who apprehended that their harvest would soon be at an end, had interest enough, (the duke of Shrewsbury, whose dutches {sic} was an Italian, being Lord Chamberlain) to procure an order, the day before the performing of this opera, to take off the subscription for it, and to open the house at the lowest prices, or not at all. This was designed to sink it, but it failed of its end. It was however performed, tho' under so great Discouragement.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ White, *English Opera*, pp. 148–150.

⁵⁹ John Huges, *Letters by Several Eminent Persons Deceased, Including the Correspondence of John Huges, Esq. (Author of The Siege of Damascus) and Several of His Friends* (London, 1773): I, in *Italian Circle*, p. 74. See also Knapp, 'A Forgotten Chapter.' Knapp's source; John Huges, ed. by William Duncombe, *Poems on Several Occasions*

Until her death in 1726, the Duchess remained one of the key figures associated with the Arcadian influenced Italian circle in London.⁶⁰ As time progressed, additional influential Italians arrived and strengthened this particular Italian clique and the Arcadian bond including the librettist Paolo Rolli, the castrato Francesco Bernardi (“Senesino”) and Giovanni Bononcini the composer.⁶¹ The Duchess was closely affiliated with Rolli in particular; for the present, we shall discuss his involvement with the Arcadians in London.

Rolli arrived in London in 1715 and was an influential addition to the Arcadian circle.⁶² Apparently, Lord Stair invited him to England and they travelled together from Italy, whereby Rolli resided with Lord Stair for several months.⁶³ (Also, see Chapter 5.) As Dorris relates, having an Italian resident in the household was generally expected of the wealthy and intellectual echelons of society:

The notion of an Italian resident in the household was not unusual in the London of the times. As Italian was considered one of the polite, hence ornamental languages, and as Italian music became increasingly fashionable, a domestic guide to these graces was considered desirable. For one who already spoke the language, a resident Italian provided the means of keeping in practise, and he would also serve to instruct those who had not yet learned the language. Further, the conversation of a man of learning can be edifying as well as delightful, and, finally, the pleasure of patronising the arts has always contained an element

(with some select essays in prose), (London: 1735), 2 Vols.

⁶⁰ Dorris, *Italian Circle*, p. 75.

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 75.

⁶² Ibid. p. 133.

⁶³ Ibid. pp. 133–136.

of prestige from being praised by the artist, which has always been an important part of patronage. Rolli was able to meet all of these conditions, including the frequent celebration of his patrons in dedications or poems, while his interest in science as well as in the fine arts seems to have made him from the beginning a familiar figure in the artistic and intellectual life of London, and hence an ornament to the noble household of a patron.⁶⁴

Rolli's career in England included editing, writing, and teaching Italian to the Royal family and to the nobility;⁶⁵ as one would expect, Rolli concentrated his work on the Italian opera libretto. By observing the dedications of his works we obtain a record of his other patrons, which included Baron Dalrymple, and in particular, Lord Bathurst and the Earl of Burlington.⁶⁶

Presently he became the focal point of the Arcadian-Italian circle for several reasons.⁶⁷ Rolli and Metastasio were both pupils of Gian-Vicenza Gravina who was one of the founding fathers of the Arcadian movement.⁶⁸ Rolli remained in contact with many prominent Arcadian-Italians while he resided in England; these individuals included, Antonio Conti, who introduced Shakespeare to

⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 136–137.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 10.

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 139.

⁶⁷ In a poem written shortly after his arrival in London, “Capitole di Paolo Rolli romano, da Londra 1716,” Rolli recorded the members of the circle he found there. The most important people mentioned are Antonio Conti, Riva, Nicolino, Bernachi, Marguerita de l’Épine, and Geminiani. Haym and Giacomo Rossi are also mentioned, but he must have perceived them as rivals and not a part of the group for he satirizes them in his *Marziale in Albion* epigrams. Dorris, *Italian Circle*, f. 33, p. 137.

⁶⁸ Ibid. pp. 11, 127.

the Italians, Antonio Cocchi, and the poet Scipione Maffei. In particular, he frequently corresponded with the Modenese diplomat Giuseppe Riva who was closely associated with Ludovico Muratori and Metastasio.⁶⁹ Essentially, Rolli was a direct link to those who embodied the ideals of the Arcadian movement, and effectively assumed the position as the unofficial leader of the Arcadian-influenced Italians in London; he was destined to play an active role in the tensions between the Italian circle* and Handel.

The Formation of the Opposing Factions

As we have observed, two opposing groups emerged before the Royal Academy was founded, and presently Handel would discover his position was situated between these factions, ultimately creating problems that would extend far into the future. Ironically, it stemmed from the introduction of Italian opera into England; the aim was to improve and advance English music, yet these intentions had been misconstrued. A major reason for this confusion, the previous attempts at translating Italian opera into English sounded ludicrous with the music to contemporary audiences; this also included bilingual operas with English and Italian texts. Ultimately this created a demand to hear authentic Italian opera in contrast to the polyglot that was produced.

As a result, two major factions surfaced at this date. The first factor concerned the Italian circle determined to eliminate the “nonsense” that was being produced in London. The second factor consisted of those who continued to promote their ambition of developing an English genre. Handel, due to his versatility in music,

⁶⁹ Ibid. pp. 10, 35.

* Hence, throughout the rest of this book, the term ‘Italian circle’ will refer to those influenced by Arcadian ideals and who were Rolli’s supporters. Not all Italians in London were part of Rolli’s clique, such as Nicola Haym and Rossi. (See f. 67).

interacted between these two factions as a catalyst for future problems. All three factions continually created friction; we shall now assess each group and the positions they assumed before the immediate foundation of the Royal Academy.

Rolli's Italian Circle: the Core and the Circumference

From its inception, two distinct groups within Rolli's circle were apparently operating a "working partnership" based on the terms of supply and demand.⁷⁰ At the core were the Italian-Arcadian activists, with their English patrons and promoters at the circumference — the Italians wished to impart their literature and culture to the English, and their patrons were eager to receive it. Where the production of Italian opera in London is concerned, the distinction between the two parts of this group is particularly important. While these two sections worked in harmony, Italian-Arcadian opera had the opportunity to flourish in London, however, when one or the other part of the group ceased to function in this fashion trouble was eminent, for instance, when the nobility patronised those who were considered to be outsiders, or on the fringes of the circle. The fact the English had their own ideals concerning opera production would also cause friction between these two parts of the circle.

Handel, although knowledgeable and well acquainted with Arcadian idealism, was willing to adapt to the English environment, and therefore was considered to be on the fringe of the group by those such as Rolli. As a result, a disturbance surfaced within the circle that would upset the balance; when the English began to selectively adopt the conventions that complied with their cultural preference, the Italians concluded their ideals were being

⁷⁰ While Dorris concentrates on the Italians in London and mentions those who patronised them, apparently he does not classify them into two different groups or sections. See *Italian Circle*, op. cit.

compromised. Ultimately, these circumstances would cause dissensions later within the Royal Academy.

The English Genre Supporters

As already mentioned, the novelty of Italian opera had placed interest for English attempts aside, yet the issue was never fully abandoned; it had a brief window of opportunity to resurface when from 1717 onward new productions of opera ceased. This paucity in production resulted from unsecured financial support and the unstable court situation caused by the increasing problems between George I and the Prince of Wales. During this period, Handel experimented with English works under the patronage of the Earl of Carnarvon; he was a guest composer-in-residence at the Earl's home, and as such, he composed the two English masques *Acis and Galatea* and *Esther*.⁷¹ Notwithstanding Handel's eagerness to compose Italian opera according to English preferences, he was also agreeable when requested to compose other genres; this adaptable aspect of his character would be particularly important during his Covent Garden period when the Italian circle would eventually retaliate.

Handel as a Catalyst

Although Handel may not have intended to initiate any contentions, his versatility in composition seemed to have highlighted the fact, what the Italians had aspired to impart was not exactly what the English desired.

The difficulties concerning Italian opera in London corresponded with the English custom of assimilating foreign

⁷¹ Christopher Hogwood, *Handel*, (New York: Thames and Hudson Inc., 1984. Reprint, 1995): pp. 72–74.

culture as a method of developing one's expertise in a particular subject. The Third Earl of Shaftesbury related the English were eager to learn from foreigners in order to acquire an appreciation of the arts from their original sources. The Earl noted his contemporaries believed by observing and/or copying masters from their place of origin, one achieves excellence in that area and thereby show all the refinements associated with "good-breeding":

One who aspires to the character of a man of breeding and politeness is careful to form his judgement of arts and sciences upon right models of perfection. If he travels to Rome, he inquires which are the truest pieces of architecture, the best remains of statues, the best paintings of a Raphael or a Carraccio. However antiquated, rough, or dismal they may appear to him at first sight, he resolves to view them over and over, till he has brought himself to relish them, and finds their hidden graces and perfections ... Nor is he less careful to turn his ear from every sort of music besides that which is the best manner and truest harmony If a natural good taste be not already formed in us, why should not we endeavour to form it, and cultivate it till it become natural?⁷²

Naturally, the Italians who were patronised by the nobility would be those whom one would refer to on matters related to Italian opera.

However, when Handel arrived in London in 1711, he inadvertently generated additional disturbances between the

⁷² Third Earl of Shaftesbury's "Advice to an Author" in *Characteristics* quoted in H.A. Needham, ed., *Taste And Criticism in the Eighteenth Century*, (London: George Harrap, 1952): pp. 55–56, in Carole Taylor, Ph. D. Thesis, *Italian Operagoing in London, 1700–1745*, (Syracuse University: 1991), p. 131.

Arcadian Italians and their patrons. This may appear contradictory as it is accepted Handel was partial to Italian *opera seria* and contributed towards developing an appreciation for the genre in London when he returned from Germany in 1712. During this time, he composed several Italian operas that continued to whet the appetites of the English audiences; all the English opera revivals were in direct competition with his *Il Pastor Fido* in 1712, *Teseo* in 1713, and *Amadigi di Gaula* in 1715. One may speculate about the problems Handel initiated as the Italians encouraged the dissemination of their culture.

From the year 1711, Handel had played a major part in the anglicization of Italian opera with *Rinaldo* as we have previously observed. When *Rinaldo* was produced, Handel's opera was perceived as a prime example of the *Italian* style and his music was greatly admired, despite the fact Hill had intended this work to be accepted as an example of how the English could develop their own particular style. From this time onward, Handel was considered one of the most skilled composers of Italian opera available, and the fact the English held him in such high esteem, naturally, he would become the most sought after composer of Italian opera in London.

Additional elements that contributed to the appeal of *Rinaldo* were the machines and the spectacular scenery, which incidentally were anti-Arcadian. As we have observed from the section discussing the Arcadian movement, scenography was not considered important in Italy in contrast with the drama or text. The English, however, approved of these effects, and this would continue to be the norm in London; clearly, sets and costumes were considered an important component of an opera as we may observe from the various reports in the newspapers of the day. When a production featured new costumes and scenery this information was advertised to generate public interest, if a revival was produced with all original scenes and costumes it was announced in a similar

fashion.⁷³ This would be one of the many differences opposing the Italian-Arcadian ideal with regard to Handel's operas.

Subsequent events suggest the Italians were not particularly pleased, and may have attempted to influence future decisions with respect to appropriate subjects. The Italians had previously interfered with the production of *Calypso and Telemachus* before Handel returned from Germany; Christopher Hogwood's description of Handel's *Il Pastor Fido* (1712) implies the choice of subject may have been influenced by the Italian presence in London:

Handel's first venture of the operatic season was not well-judged. *Il Pastor Fido*, or *The Faithful Shepherd*, which was finished on 24 October and opened less than a month later, received a short shrift in an opera register (attributed to Francis Colman but undoubtedly by other hands, since it continues during the period he spent as a diplomat in Florence): 'The Scene represented only ye Country of Arcadia. ye Habits were old. — ye Opera Short'. The cast list shows that neither Nicolini nor Boschi was in England, which must have meant a major public disappointment; the music, written in Handel's deliberately simplified pastoral style, with none of the flamboyance of *Rinaldo*, a reduced number of arias (many of these both borrowed and monothematic) and very abbreviated recitative, represents an Italian ideal, less compelling and more stereotyped than English pastoral precedents

⁷³ For instance, the revival of Handel's *Amadigi* on June 20th, 1716 was announced in the *Daily Courant* as follows: "At the King's Theatre in the Hay-Market, this present Wednesday, being the 20th of June, will be perform'd an Opera call'd Amadis. With all the Scenes and Cloaths, belonging to this Opera : Particularly, the Fountain-Scene. To which will be added, Two New Symphonies." See Deutsch, p. 71.

of which Handel was probably ignorant.⁷⁴

Judging from this description, *Il Pastor Fido* was a sweeping stylistic change when compared with *Rinaldo*; one can almost sense that Handel was probing the public's expectations. Interestingly, this description corresponds neatly with the ideals promoted by the Arcadian Crescimbeni whom we have mentioned previously; Handel had been patronised by the members of the Arcadian Academy while in Italy and was familiar with their ideals.⁷⁵ It is evident Handel was not averse to changing his style; this production may have been the delight of the Italians, yet the English were not impressed. Handel must have pondered upon their reaction and obviously decided to return to his flamboyant style of production with *Teseo* and *Amadigi di Gaula*.⁷⁶

As we have just observed, the patrons' wishes and the goals of the Italians were varied; eminently, the simplified Arcadian ideal was not in favour. Handel had tested the pastoral convention, and discovered that a variation of the Italian style was required, incidentally, there is evidence that Handel approved of the English productions such as *Calypso* and *Telemachus*.⁷⁷ Handel willingly

⁷⁴ Hogwood, *Handel*, pp. 66–67.

⁷⁵ Ellen T. Harris, *Handel and the Pastoral Tradition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 56–57.

⁷⁶ Hogwood, *Handel*, pp. 67, 70.

⁷⁷ Knapp stated; “Perhaps the greatest compliment of all, which also comes in a roundabout way, is one quoted by Lowenberg. William Kitchener or Kitchiner ... wrote on the back of the ... ‘Songs in ... Calypso and Telemachus’, sold in Julian Marshall’s sale, 29 July 1884, the following comment; ‘Dr. Arnold told me Mr. Handell had so high an opinion of Calypso and Telemachus as to have declared he would have sooner have composed it than any one of his operas. W. K. 1813.’ Since Arnold is said to have been known by Handel and advised him as a boy, the information is probably fairly reliable.” From Knapp, ‘A Forgotten Chapter,’ p. 16. Knapp’s sources; Alfred Lowenberg, *Annals of Opera*,

adapted his style of composition and apparently, he did not hold with the opinion that he was compromising his skills or artistry in the process. The nobility favoured Handel's eclectic compositions, and therefore they became divided in their preferences; while they wished to have Italian opera and follow the Italian model under the guidance of those they patronised, they also wanted it produced according to their requirements. Their selective preferences created many difficulties as the Italians were somewhat uncompromising in their ideals. A ripple in the Italian circle developed as the nobility at the circumference diverted their priorities from the accepted Italian/Arcadian traditions. The Italians at the core of the circle were dependant upon the nobility, and if the nobility were modifying their expectations and were "filtering" the ideals that the members of the core were presenting to them, the group as a whole could not continue to exist, or would at the very least, be placed in an uncompromising situation.

Although Handel may not have intentionally acted as a catalyst to these problems, he did not improve the situation as he assumed an active role in the production of his operas. Handel had personally supervised the production of *Rinaldo*, and Carole Taylor states this was "a first" in the establishment of Italian opera in England, i.e. that the composer should monitor a production.⁷⁸ Therefore, under these circumstances, Handel had achieved a unique position, and this may have provided an additional source of aggravation for the Italians. As previously discussed, the composer was considered one of the least important contributors regarding the creation of an opera in Italy.

Consequently, a polemical struggle generated by this situation would continue to cause upheaval. Apart from the problems occurring within the two sections of the Italian circle, the

2nd ed. (Geneva: 1955): p. 117 and *Dictionary of National Biography*, (London: 1885): ii, p. 111.

⁷⁸ See her thesis, *Italian Operagoing in London*, p. 29.

English-genre supporters would prove a further irritation for the Italians in the future. Perhaps the most decisive factor was the Italians' disapproval of Handel's willingness to compose in a manner that conformed with English tastes and customs, and more importantly, that he as a composer should have been granted this prodigious level of authority with the production of opera. Obviously, the Italians could not properly introduce their ideals of reformed Italian opera to the unique underdeveloped operatic territory of London as they existed in Italy if the English preferences were catered to. The same applies when the composer has been allocated more control; it may have been viewed that the music, as a result of his involvement, would encroach upon the realm of the drama, which was not the Arcadian aim. When the Royal Academy was founded, a battlefield was also established where these unresolved tensions were to be vented.

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